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Democrats Obstruct Ag Bill With Proposal to Cancel Health Coverage for 1.4 Million

In a second attempt to attach unrelated legislation to the agriculture appropriations bill, Democrats today hope to offer a portion of the Kennedy health-care mandates bill that would wildly inflate the cost of health insurance. This would be particularly damaging to farmers, loggers and fishermen whose uninsurance rates are higher than those of any other workers.

The so-called "medical necessity" portion of Senator Kennedy's bill offers the illusion of patient control by requiring health plans and employers to pay for whatever care a physician recommends. But the Kennedy provision would leave millions uninsured and unable to meet the cost of high medical bills.

A study by the Barents Group, an economic consulting firm, estimated that the "medical necessity" portions of the Kennedy bill could:

- *Cost nearly \$60 a year per covered household;*
- *Cost employers \$185 a year per covered employee;*
- *Eliminate 191,500 jobs; and*
- *Cancel coverage for 1.4 million Americans.*

Canceling health insurance and eliminating jobs leaves patients with no control. According to the Employee Benefits Research Institute, nearly half (43.6 percent) of all workers in the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector have no health insurance. How many of the 1.4 million Americans who lose their coverage under this provision would be farmers?

Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chairman Patrick J. Kennedy recently revealed "we have written off the rural areas." To delay a bill designed to aid farmers with one that seems designed to hurt them takes this strategy a step further. It is an assault on farmers.

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